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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KINSHASA 002178

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/29/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [RW](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: KABILA DISCUSSES EASTERN SITUATION WITH FOREIGN AMBASSADORS

Classified By Ambassador Roger Meece. Reason 1.4 (b/d)

1. (C) Summary: President Kabila held a November 29 discussion with Ambassadors from the UNSC Perm 5 countries, Belgium, South Africa, Angola, and Nigeria, and UN SRSG Swing. While speaking in measured tones, Kabila made clear his frustration with Rwandan President Kagame, and in essence Kabila accused Kagame of seeking to wreck entirely the DRC's transition. Kabila and close advisors outlined steps being taken by the GDRC to address the ex-FAR/Interahamwe threat, and appealed for united international community support for use of the Joint Verification Mechanism (JVM), tripartite process, and other political and diplomatic means to address regional problems. Kabila reported Rwandan and Congolese military chiefs should be meeting on the border this week. He also noted, however, that the government is deploying FARDC brigades to North Kivu to address threats both from ex-FAR/Interahamwe as well as from Rwanda. In related activity, Nigerian President Obasanjo is coming to Kinshasa Dec 6., and MONUC is seeking to begin JVM operations this week. A Joint Verification Commission meeting has been proposed for December 9 in Kinshasa. The South African Ambassador suggested that Mbeki is exploring how SADC may be involved in solutions as well. Other items discussed during the meeting will be reported septel. End summary.

Kabila Discusses the East

2. (C) Following his return to Kinshasa over the weekend from the Ouagadougou Francophonie summit, President Kabila convened the morning of November 29 what he characterized as an informal discussion with the Ambassadors of the UNSC Perm 5 members, Belgium, South Africa, Angola, and Nigeria, plus UN SRSG Bill Swing. Kabila was accompanied by Chief of Staff Boshab, Special Advisor Kaputo, Ambassador-at-Large Okitundu, Diplomatic Advisor Kapanaga, and his spokesperson.

3. (C) Kabila opened by emphasizing his concern over the situation in the east, and specifically the threat of renewed invasion by Rwandan forces. He noted that in recent weeks, the DRC and Rwanda had been parties to signature of the Joint Verification Mechanism (JVM) agreement and the U.S.-facilitated Tripartite Agreement, and had taken part in the Dar es Salaam summit and separate meetings with the visiting UNSC. He and Rwandan President Kagame met in Dar. Only a short time after all of this, Kagame made new threats to send his forces across the DRC border, a possibility never mentioned in their meeting only a few days before. Kabila said he found the timing strange, and later added that even though "some" do not believe Rwanda already has troops inside the DRC, in fact they do. He asserted Kagame's public threat was only a justification of a course of action already launched. Kabila also noted that the new Rwandan threat occurred while 8th Military District Commander Obed is "absent" from the area.

Meeting in Ouagadougou, Threats, Plans

4. (C) Kabila reported that he had met again with Kagame in Ouagadougou. He said that Kagame had asked "officially" for Rwandan troops to re-enter the DRC, possibly with 2-3 brigades operating with the Congolese to disarm ex-FAR/Interahamwe forces in the region. Kabila reported he deemed the proposal "inadmissible" as the Congolese people would simply not accept the renewed acknowledged presence of Rwandan troops on Congolese soil. Indeed, it would risk a potentially violent public reaction in various parts of the country.

5. (C) Kabila noted his own intent to deal with the ex-FAR/Interahamwe, and had Special Advisor Kaputo expand. Kaputo ran through a brief recent history of the JVM and Tripartite processes, and said the GDRC had developed a plan to deal with the ex-FAR/Interahamwe within the time frame described in the Tripartite Agreement. Specifically, actions were being taken to talk with Mai Mai and other local leaders to locate and identify ex-FAR/Interahamwe forces and specifically leaders. In the meantime, brigades are to be trained at Kitona base within the next three months for deployment to use against those elements who resist voluntary disarmament and repatriation (DDRRR). Also during this time, it is important for Rwanda to renew efforts in Rwanda to encourage return.

16. (C) Given the current situation, Kaputo said that as an interim measure the government is undertaking an "interim" deployment of additional forces to North Kivu. Kabila later added that just as significant new forces had earlier been sent to South Kivu in response to the destabilization threat posed by "dissident" Generals Nkunda and Mutebusi, significant new forces will be sent to North Kivu now to address the threat from both the ex-FAR/Interahamwe and from Rwanda across the border. Kabila also reported that the Congolese and Rwandan military chiefs are to meet this week on the border, either on the border bridge near Bukavu, or in the "no-man's land" border area near Goma.

Ambassadorial Responses

17. (C) SRSB Swing led the responses from the foreign Ambassadors with three recommendations. First, JVM operations in North Kivu should start immediately using personnel already stationed in Goma and Gisenyi. He indicated that the final formal document, a concept of operations, had already been signed by GDRC Ambassador-at-Large Ghonda and was awaiting signature in Kigali by Great Lakes Special Envoy Sezibera. (Note: MONUC DDR Chief told DCM and PolCouns later on Nov. 29 that Sezibera did indeed sign the JVM concept of operations today.) Secondly, Swing said that he obtained agreement from both Kigali and Kinshasa to hold a meeting of the Joint Verification Commission on December 9 in Kinshasa, although it would be chaired by current incumbent Rwanda. Swing noted, however, that Rwandan FM Murigande has recently commented that he did not see the need to hold the meeting before January. Swing asserted he believes it now more important than ever to hold the meeting quickly. Thirdly, Swing encouraged the Tripartite mechanism to be fully utilized for dialogue among the respective regional players.

18. (C) Other Ambassadorial interventions fully supported the need to start immediately JVM operations, to make use of the Tripartite, and to avoid recourse to military actions. While endorsing these sentiments, I also noted the long-standing seemingly intractable nature of the problem represented by Hutu extremist forces. In addition to whatever problem they pose to Rwanda, they certainly threaten the security of Congolese in the east and general stability as well, but a solution has been hard to find. While Congolese efforts to neutralize these forces are needed and welcome, I encouraged consideration of other potential offers that may be made by other countries (comment: thinking specifically of South Africa) which could be useful in this regard. The French Ambassador pointed out the problem of the "expenditure chain" which has delayed many issues in the GDRC, including military integration and training, in reference to the planned training in Kitona. (Comment: This is an allusion to control by Vice President Bemba of key portfolios, and the delays and political problems arising from the divided responsibilities.) The UK Ambassador underscored the importance of concrete results in the east. The Belgian Ambassador emphasized the importance of Rwandan actions to create an environment conducive to the return of Rwanda Hutu combatants in the DRC, commenting that Brussels does not believe the signals to-date "have been sufficiently clear".

19. (C) The South African Ambassador made an allusion to my remarks, but did not describe any specific offers or ideas that President Mbeki may have made to Kabila in recent contacts. He did say that Mbeki is exploring how SADC may be involved and helpful to a solution.

110. (C) The Nigerian Ambassador reported that President Obasanjo will be arriving in Kinshasa on December 5 or 6 in follow-up to his participation in the Ouagadougou meeting. He reportedly plans to continue on to Kigali following his Kinshasa stop.

Presidential Wrap-Up

111. (C) In his final summary, Kabila said that he has been trying to determine what the Rwandans really want. While the ex-FAR/Interahamwe are a continuing problem, he does not believe they represent any longer a threat to fundamental GOR stability. He opined that there may be three basic motivations. Rwanda retains strong coltan mining and other commercial interests in North Kivu, and they presumably want to preserve them. Secondly, they may wish to derail the DRC transition process. Surely they are aware that a renewed acknowledged large-scale troop presence in the DRC could set off major public violent demonstrations that could wreck the fragile transition process. Thirdly, he wondered if in fact the Rwandans want the hard-line core of remaining Hutu extremists back. A new military operation, or even threat of a military operation, acts as a motivator to stay away. Kabila also speculated about a DRC threat to enter Rwanda,

for example to seize General Mutebusi or his people. Would this be regarded in the same way?

¶12. (C) Kabila also expressed frustration with meetings and declarations. Kabila said he refused a Belgian request in Ouagadougou for a joint declaration with Kagame, adding that the Congolese people have seen too many statements that seem to mean nothing (comment: a clear allusion to the JVM and tripartite accords, and the Dar es Salaam regional conference). Kabila noted again his intention to deploy new troops to North Kivu to address both threats, from the ex-FAR/Interahamwe and from Rwanda. He appealed for support for these deployments, and for general international community support for political and diplomatic efforts to avoid renewed general warfare in the area.

Comment

¶13. (C) Kabila spoke in measured tones throughout the meeting, but clearly projected a sense of frustration and resentment over the Rwandan threat. It is unclear which troops are to be involved in the Kitona training plan, but this may be linked to the Angolan government effort to train significant numbers of troops in Kitona, primarily Presidential GGSP. The GGSP is widely viewed as the only potential FARDC force capable of undertaking any kind of sustained offensive military operations. Kabila's reference to 8th Military District Commander Obed's "absence" from Goma likely reflects Kabila's intent to block Obed's return permanently. Obed has been largely viewed in the Presidency as unresponsive to Kinshasa, and likely working in cooperation with Kigali. Obed's removal, much less a new deployment of supposedly Kinshasa-controlled troops into North Kivu, could certainly effect a major change in the overall balance of forces and influence in the province. This, along with the recent reported failure of the joint FARDC/MONUC operation against ex-FAR/Interahamwe forces in North Kivu due to the lack of FARDC logistical support capability, may indeed not be unrelated to the timing of the current threat and general situation. As reflected in our reporting, we have been aware for some weeks of significant new renewed political maneuvering in North Kivu by one or more key players, including the Kinshasa government, RCD-Goma, and North Kivu Governor Serufuli. We may be witnessing the denouement.

¶14. (C) Comment continued: Whatever the causes, the overriding priority from our perspective at this point must be the avoidance of renewed large-scale fighting that could engulf the region in a renewed period of warfare. Such a development would certainly bring crashing down the overall DRC transition as well. Insofar as a solution to neutralize the remaining Hutu extremist forces can be identified, possibly with South African or other foreign troops to help take on the task, so much the better to eliminate the long-stated GOR major concern, as well as an ongoing threat to the security of all in the region. Clearly, we should also use our efforts to support the range of political efforts underway, including the JVM and tripartite, and what we hope will be coordinated efforts by Obasanjo and Mbeki. End comment.

¶15. (U) Bujumbura minimize considered.

MEECE